

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 000215

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: EXEMPTION 1.6 X5, X6

TAGS: PREL MARR TU IZ SY IR CY

SUBJECT: TURKEY CLAIMS SYRIA AND IRAN SHARE CONCERN OVER KURDISH AMBITIONS IN IRAQ

(U) Classified by Ambassador Eric S. Edelman. Reasons: 1.5
b and d.

¶1. (C) Summary: Syria and Iran have expressed concerns to Turkey about the Kurds' ambition for maximum autonomy over a greater territory in Iraq, according to MFA U/S Ziyal. Ankara says it is resisting "ganging up" on the Kurds with Damascus and Tehran, and is urging the Kurds to be reasonable. Ziyal told the Ambassador that Turkey would like a written response to the January 9 letter from PM Erdogan to the President on Iraq. He voiced the hope that developments in Iraq would not distract Ankara from focusing its attention over the next few months to reaching a Cyprus settlement.
End Summary.

¶2. (C) During a January 12 meeting on another subject with MFA Under Secretary Ugur Ziyal and other senior MFA officials, the Ambassador raised Iraq. He noted that the recent letter from PM Erdogan to the President was thoughtful and asked whether the GOT expected a response or whether the letter would simply contribute to the exchange the President and PM would have on this subject when they meet on January ¶28. Ziyal confirmed that a written response would be best.

¶3. (C) Ziyal noted that the Kurds were making a play for Kirkuk, but they have a "different concept of democracy." They were moving people into the villages around both Kirkuk and Mosul, Deputy U/S Ali Tuygun added. They do not hesitate to use arms to get their way. The Ambassador responded that the US was also concerned by recent developments in Kirkuk and has begun taking steps to prevent any group from effecting change through force, inspecting political party offices, confiscating weapons, etc. It was important for all of the communities there to remain calm and avoid provocation

¶4. (C) Ziyal noted that the concept of federalism in Iraq was growing and that this was not a good development. He claimed that both Syria and Iran had approached Turkey about their concerns for this development. Turkish public concern was also growing, he noted. The safety of the Turkomen in northern Iraq would be an issue for Turkey, but the overriding concern was that the political structure should be decided democratically and not by the gun. The Ambassador reiterated US commitment to Iraq's territorial integrity, noting that CPA was encouraging the Iraqis to develop a framework that would not risk the break up of the country. Regarding the Kurds' proposals for greater autonomy, some Arab members of the IGC were no happier about them than were Turkey, Syria or Iran.

¶5. (C) The GOT has been warning the Iraqi Kurds "not to shoot themselves in the foot again," Ziyal said. They should learn the lessons of the past; "we do not want Kurds and Arabs shooting at each other again." PUK leader Jalal Talabani appeared to be more reasonable, Ziyal observed, noting that he had some "political acumen," while KDP leader Masoud Barzani "has gone over the edge of Kurdish nationalism." Turkey does not want to be pushed back into the tripartite (Turkey-Syria-Iran) framework, he repeated. Tuygun added that three-party talks would appear as the neighbors "ganging up" on the Kurds. Whatever happens, "we don't want the US to be blamed for it," Ziyal added.

¶6. (C) The Ambassador noted that the US had a number of overriding objectives in Iraq that the US has spelled out for the Kurds: preserving the territorial integrity and political unity of the country, opposing any change to the status quo by force, abolishing militias, preserving oil resources as national patrimony, and central government control of Iraq's borders. There is a process underway now addressing each of these subjects, which will continue. Finally, even after the transfer of sovereignty to a transitional authority, the US would maintain a strong military presence to help ensure territorial integrity, stability and security.

¶7. (C) Ziyal worried that the Transitional Authority would

simply be a new name for the Governing Council; Jalal Talabani had told the Turks that the IGC members would constitute the new body. This will not change the dynamics in Baghdad, Ziyal lamented. Arab members of the IGC, like Chalabi, have not developed domestic support and cannot stand up to the Kurds. (Instead, they may be focusing more on maximizing their financial gains while in office, he opined.)

18. (C) The point Ziyal said he really wanted to make was, that in early 2003 an opportunity to resolve the Cyprus issue was missed because the GOT was focused on the impending US action against Iraq. The May 1 deadline for a Cyprus settlement was quickly approaching, and Ziyal hoped that Iraq would not again distract the parties from reaching a settlement. (The subsequent discussion of Cyprus is reported septel--notal.)

19. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.
EDELMAN